

Information for Oral Examination Candidates

I. Purpose of the Oral Examination

The **Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP)** is charged by law with the responsibility of examining candidates for licensure. Licensure is designed to serve the public by ensuring that those licensed possess the fundamental knowledge, skills and professionalism to practice at the entry level. As the final step prior to earning the privilege of independent practice, the oral examination is an integral part of the licensure process, allowing the Board to evaluate a candidate's skills directly.

The purpose of the exam is to evaluate the candidate's ability to apply what they know to a vignette that is representative of situations that are encountered in independent practice. The exam focuses on the candidate's ability to conceptualize the case in a meaningful way, to explore differential diagnosis issues, and to formulate an appropriate treatment plan. Additional questions address ethics, laws, Board rules, supervision issues, and other relevant areas.

In order to sit for the oral exam, a candidate must have completed the legally required doctoral degree and have passed both the ASPPB Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology and the Board's Jurisprudence Examination. Passage of the Oral Exam protects the public by ensuring that the candidate has the knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level practice in the state of Texas.

II. Examination Procedures

A. Application

1. The oral exam will be administered at regularly scheduled intervals. Examination dates and application deadlines will appear on the TSBEP website.
2. Candidates must request an application form from the TSBEP office.
3. Candidates must return the completed application form to the TSBEP office, along with the required fee, before the application deadline
4. Candidates must have passed the EPPP exam and the TSBEP Jurisprudence exam in order to be eligible to take the oral, but then do not have to wait until their post-doctoral supervisory year is completed.
5. When applying to take this exam, candidates are asked to specify their general area of specialization: clinical, child clinical, counseling, industrial/organizational, school, or neuropsychology.
6. TSBEP will notify each candidate of the date, time, and location of the oral exam. Examination times are not negotiable, and exam fees are not refundable.

B. Examination Day

1. The candidate will report to the oral exam site at the date and time stated on the notification. If the candidate has an emergency that prevents attendance, the

candidate is responsible for notifying the Board. If you are unfamiliar with the examination site, plan to arrive a bit early, as exams will start and end on time. Be sure to bring photo identification.

2. The candidate will be examined by two senior psychologists with expertise in the candidate's general area of specialization. The vignette assigned for the examination will also be drawn from this general area of specialization.

3. One hour is allotted for the examination.

4. The examiners will record the examination on equipment provided by TSBEP. No other recording will be permitted.

5. Note pads and pencils will be made available to the candidate for use in the exam room only. Notes may not be taken out of the exam room, except by one of the examiners.

6. Other than a handbag or small backpack, no other materials may be brought into the examination room. Candidates are urged not to bring any electronic equipment into the exam room (e.g. phones, laptops, pagers, PDAs etc.)

7. At the end of the examination, candidates will be asked to wait on site until dismissed by the Board staff.

8. Following the examination, each examiner will independently record the candidate's scores on the Candidate Score Sheet and will determine whether the candidate has achieved a passing score.

a. If both examiners agree (either both pass or both fail the candidate), the candidate will be dismissed by the TSBEP staff.

b. If the examiners disagree (one pass, one fail), the candidate will be given the opportunity for a re-examination on that same day.

c. Reexaminations will involve two new examiners and a new vignette.

d. Same-day examinations will be offered without charge.

e. Candidates who do not receive passing scores from both examiners on the second examination will be counted as a failure.

9. Candidates will be notified by mail of their pass or fail status. Absolutely no information about exam scores will be given out in any other manner.

a. Candidates who pass will simply be told they have passed.

b. Candidates who fail will receive feedback instructing them about the broad areas where they scored poorly (see Scoring, below).

10. Candidates who fail the oral exam may reapply to take the examination with payment of the appropriate fee.

11. A candidate may appeal a decision if there has been a procedural error.

a. Procedural matters are to be reviewed by TSBEP Oral Exam Committee.

b. The Oral Exam Committee may not take corrective action if there is no evidence of a procedural error.

c. Further appeals may be made according to the requirements of the Administrative Procedures and Texas Register Act of the State of Texas.

C. Selection of Examiners

The examiner pool is composed of senior psychologists who are nominated by their peers. Potential examiners who have been licensed at least 5 years, who have appropriate academic background and professional experience, and who are in good standing in the profession are appointed to the examiner pool by the Board. Examiners are instructed to withdraw from the oral examination of a particular candidate if for any reason (prior relationship, bias, institutional loyalty, etc.) they are unable to serve as objective and unbiased evaluators.

D. Vignettes

The vignettes used in the oral examination have been developed by teams of senior psychologists in each area of specialization. Effort has been made to select case examples that are representative of situations commonly encountered in the usual course of professional business. The vignettes are not theory bound and candidates are not required to adopt any particular theoretical orientation (but they should be able to articulate a case formulation according to some standard or model that is generally recognized in their area).

Candidates will be given a few moments to read the vignette and make notes if they choose. They will then be asked to read the vignette aloud for the tape recorder. The examiners will then ask a series of questions about the case. These questions comprise the semi-structured interview format and are reasonably closely scripted. However, examiners are free to ask follow-up questions in order to determine whether the candidate has formulated a satisfactory answer. Examiners receive training in the process. They understand that the oral exam is designed to determine whether a candidate has basic entry-level abilities and knowledge. Thus, follow-up questions should help candidates show what they know, not trip them up with arcane details.

E. Scoring

a. For each vignette, examiners are provided questions that elicit the candidate's abilities in the following 9 domains:

1. Identifies the problems (e.g. initial hypotheses, differential diagnoses, etc.) This may include reaching an accurate and appropriately substantiated evaluation of the problem in an efficient manner, including DSM IV R differential diagnosis and setting forth the problem in a viable manner with respect to relevant theoretical framework and initial hypothesis and formulation.

2. Identifies and obtains information/psychometrics (e.g. psychometrics, observational data collection, etc.). This may include demonstration of working knowledge and skills of psychometric tests and/or other measurement principles and techniques; making a clear differential diagnosis based on information obtained; use of appropriate measurement or assessment strategies (models, techniques, instruments) to test identified hypothesis and problems; identification of required information for accurate diagnosis and treatment planning.

3. Develops and processes the implementation of a plan of action and/or intervention. This area of inquiry may include questions to allow the candidate to demonstrate utilization of adequate knowledge of appropriate intervention procedures and propose an appropriate plan of action for intervention. This may include elaboration such as to describe a plan that encompasses and is compatible with available information; takes into account appropriate and relevant resources (e.g. medical, work environment, community, school, family, etc.); displays knowledge of viable intervention procedures; sorts problem into treatable components; demonstrates follow-up procedures appropriate to plan of action; and/or demonstrates knowledge and importance of communication skills necessary to implement plan of action.

4. Handles crisis situation. Questions in this area may allow the candidate to show awareness of most factors involved in a crisis situation and demonstrate knowledge and use of referral networks. The ability to assess quickly crisis situations and plan viable intervention procedures as well as propose procedures to prevent subsequent crisis also may be assessed.

5. Attends to cultural and other relevant differences. Questions in this area may be directed to allow the candidate to demonstrate understanding of the role which social class, cultural, ethnic, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc. have on human growth and development; demonstrate knowledge of circumstances warranting referral; and distinguish relevant factors that may exist among cultures or may be person specific. Ideally, the candidate demonstrates awareness of their own limitation and expertise including one's own values and biases; knowledge of specific areas of consultation needed and how to obtain them; knowledge of circumstances that may warrant referral, understanding of cultural, social, political, advocacy, and other factors; and knowledge that enables effective work with individuals whose demographics are different from the candidate.

6. Demonstrates awareness of professional limitations. Questions in this area allow the candidate to demonstrate general awareness of areas of limited knowledge and skill; awareness of areas of need for continuing improvement of knowledge and skills; and importance of upgrading professional abilities. Ideally, the candidate will be able to demonstrate knowledge of effective functioning within their education and experiential limitations and demonstrate knowledge of limits of practice and knowledge of when to refer or seek consultation.

7. Application of professional standards. This may include demonstration of knowledge of standards, guidelines, rules related to supervision and practice; judgments consistent with published standards; and ability to integrate published standards and ethical guidelines as related to the case vignette or general application. Ideally, the candidate may demonstrate keen awareness of APA Standards for Providers of Psychological Services; awareness of the Specialty Guidelines for Delivery of Services in his/her chosen area; application of appropriate supervisory standards; and specifically discusses and refers to relevant Standards, Guidelines, supervisory rules, and APA standards, as reference sources in responding to questions during the examination.

8. Application of laws. In response to questions in this area, candidates should demonstrate suitable application of Texas laws and Board rules involving licensing and professional practice of psychology. Ideally, the candidate may demonstrate exact knowledge of Texas laws and Board rules relating to the profession of

psychology, evaluate legal issues related to the practice of psychology; and display accurate sensitivity to issues involving confidentiality.

9. Application of ethics. Throughout the examination and in response to specific questions the candidate should demonstrate application of ethical standards, understanding of information regarding professional ethics, and knowledge about how to resolve ethical issues. Ideally, this may include a high degree of knowledge about ethical standards, application of ethical standards, and awareness of viable options when facing an ethical dilemma.

b. Each of these nine content areas is scored.

1. Pass-plus +9 points, for an unusually well articulated answer.
2. Pass +8 points for a good, passing answer.
3. Marginal +3 points, for a weak, vague, or incomplete answer.
4. Unacceptable -10 points for an answer that is substantially

incomplete or incorrect.

c. A candidate must receive a score of 64 points to pass the oral exam. An unacceptable (-10) score will automatically result in a failure on the exam.

d. If a candidate receives a failing score, the examiners will indicate the areas failed on a feedback sheet. This information will be sent to candidates that have failed the exam. Passing candidates will receive no feedback. In cases of a split decision on the part of the examiners, candidates will be provided a feedback form indicating the failed areas prior to their next exam.

F. Preparation

Many candidates report that it is helpful to have practiced formulating cases with a mentor or supervisor. Reviewing a case and imagining the sort of questions that might arise in each of the nine content areas will be helpful.